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TERROR EPICENTRES NOT IMMUNE TO 'JUSTIFIABLE PUNISHMENT': RAJNATH

Targeting Pakistan, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said Operation Sindoor demonstrated state-backed 'terror epicentres' are no longer safe havens

'END DOUBLE STANDARDS IN TERROR FIGHT'

Speaking at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting in Kyrgyz capital Bishkek in the presence of Pak Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, Singh called on the influential regional grouping to not lose sight of "state-sponsored" cross-border terrorism, stressing that there is no place for any "double standards" or ambiguity in combating the global menace

NEED CONSISTENCY, NOT SELECTIVE RESPONSE

- Without naming Pakistan, Singh said "terrorism has no nationality and no theology", adding that the credibility of regional groupings such as the SCO would depend on consistency, not selective responses
- He urged the SCO not to hesitate in seeking appropriate action against those who "abet, shelter and provide safe havens" to terrorists | **P11**

2001

WHEN THE GROUPING WAS FOUNDED. INDIA AND PAKISTAN BECAME MEMBERS IN 2007

CHENNAI ▪ MADURAI ▪ VIJAYAWADA ▪ BENGALURU ▪ KOCHI ▪ HYDERABAD ▪ VISAKHAPATNAM ▪ COIMBATORE ▪ KOZHIKODE ▪ THIRUVANANTHAPURAM ▪ BELAGAVI ▪ BHUBANESWAR ▪ SHIVAMOGGA ▪ MANGALURU ▪ TIRUPATI ▪ TIRUCHY ▪ TIRUNELVELI ▪ SAMBALPUR ▪ HUBBALLI ▪ DHARMAPURI ▪ KOTTAYAM ▪ KANNUR ▪ VILLUPURAM ▪ KOLLAM ▪ TADEPALLIGUDEM ▪ NAGAPATTINAM ▪ THRISSUR ▪ KALABURAGI

Aviation industry SOS as jet fuel prices zoom

Operations unsustainable, warn Air India, IndiGo and SpiceJet

ARSHAD KHAN @ New Delhi

ALARMED by the steep rise in aviation turbine fuel (ATF) prices, IndiGo, Air India and SpiceJet have warned of shutting down operations unless the government intervenes to save the aviation sector, which is already bleeding due to the frequent airspace closures amid the war in West Asia.

The Federation of Indian Airlines (FIA), which represents the three airlines, have written to the civil aviation ministry seeking its urgent intervention to set the same fuel pricing mechanism uniformly across both domestic and international operations. The letter pointed out that this was done in 2022 through the establishment of the 'crack band' mechanism (pricing framework linked to fair refining margins, or 'crack spread', between crude oil and ATF). This was set at $12–22/barrel in 2022.

As global jet ATF prices more than doubled to $180-190/barrel since the war broke out in West Asia on February 28, the Indian government last month limited the hike to ₹15 per litre for domestic operations. However, for international operations, the price rose by ₹73 per litre.

ATF prices account for 30-40% of an airline's overall operating cost. Following the April hike, this percentage band increased to 55-60%.

The letter said the 'irrational increase' in ATF prices will result in 'insurmountable losses' for airlines, grounding of aircraft and cancellation of flights. "In order to survive, sustain and continue operation, we request your urgent intervention for immediate and meaningful financial support to tide over the current situation," said the letter dated April 26.

The airlines are also seeking a temporary suspension of excise duty (currently set at 11%) on ATF and VAT rates in key states.

DAY 60 | WAR WATCH

Crack band

FIA has called for a pricing framework based on the 'crack band mechanism' ($12–22/bbl), which was implemented in October 2022, claiming this leaves room for a reasonable and fair margin for oil marketing companies

OPEC and OPEC+

OPEC was formed in 1960 by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela to break the cartel led by Western oil firms. OPEC+ is a broader alliance formed in 2016 to include non-members to set oil production policies

UAE exits oil cartel, Don cold to Iran proposal

AGENCIES @ Dubai/Washington

THE United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Tuesday announced its exit from the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the wider OPEC+ alliance. A longtime member of OPEC, the UAE's membership ends on May 1 and will not be renewed.

The announcement came on a day when oil prices climbed again as the prospects of reopening the Strait of Hormuz appeared dim with the Trump administration not showing interest in Iran's latest offer to reopen Hormuz after the US blockade is lifted.

The UAE said the decision follows careful consideration of its national interest and its stature in the global energy market. "This reflects the UAE's long-term strategic and economic vision and evolving energy profile... and reinforces its commitment to a responsible, reliable role in global energy markets," it stated.

The move comes amid the Emirates' frosty relations with neighbour and OPEC heavyweight Saudi Arabia. UAE has been trying to leverage its own foreign policy amid pushback from Saudi Arabia under an assertive Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

The UAE is one of the world's top oil producers and its exit from Vienna-based OPEC could weaken the oil cartel which controls global oil prices through production cuts. However, the withdrawal won't necessarily have any immediate effects in markets as oil supplies are already constrained by the Iran war.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump on Tuesday claimed that Tehran "has just" informed Washington that it is in a "state of collapse". "They (Iran) want us to "Open the Hormuz Strait," as soon as possible, as they try to figure out their leadership situation," Trump posted on social media.

Decisive poll phase in West Bengal today

Singham vs Pushpa side show

Amid fears of widespread violence, a side show played out with the EC's police observer Ajay Pal Sharma warning potential troublemakers of "appropriate treatment". The TMC called out the Prayagraj ACP, who earned the moniker *Singham* for his crackdown on criminals, for voter 'intimidation'. TMC's Jahangir Khan retorted, "If he is *Singham*, I am *Pushpa*," alluding to the award-winning Telugu action film by the same name where the protagonist's most popular dialogue is "Pushpa will not bow, damn it."

SUBHENDU MAITI @ Kolkata

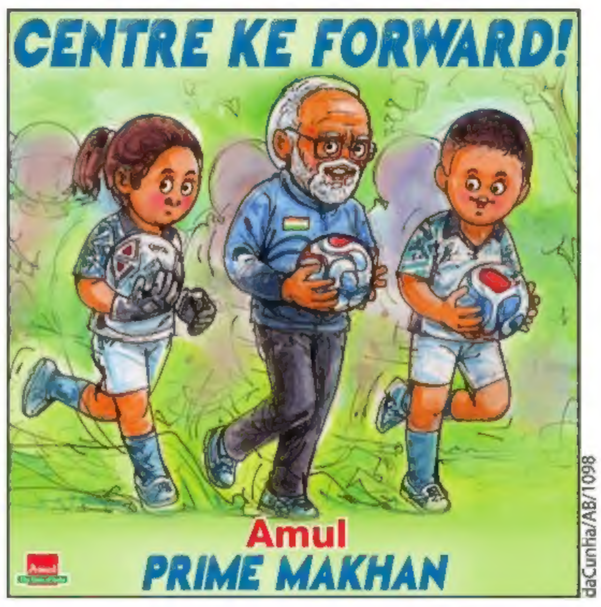
AFTER weeks of rhetoric, roadshows, and a political temperature that rose in tandem with the summer heat, it's time for the real thing. As West Bengal goes to polls for the second and final phase on Wednesday, appellate tribunals upheld the appeals of just 1,468 of the over 20 lakh voters who were removed from the supplementary list following the controversial special intensive revision of poll rolls.

The final phase, covering 142 assembly constituencies, is widely seen as the decisive one. It is here, in the traditional stronghold of the Trinamool Congress in south Bengal, that the party's decade-long dominance faces its sternest test.

Polling officials check election materials for voting in the second phase in Kolkata | PTI

At the centre of attention is Bhabanipur, where the contest has crystallised into the most closely watched face-off of the phase: Mamata Banerjee versus Leader of the Opposition Suvendu Adhikari—once an insider in her political circle, now her most prominent challenger. Their battle is as much personal as it is political, emblematic of the broader struggle playing out across the state.

Around them, an array of senior leaders and emerging figures are in the fray—ministers such as Firhad Hakim, Arup Biswas, Sobhandeb Chatterjee, Chandrima Bhattacharya and Sashi Panja; BJP's Swapan Dasgupta; Left leaders including Bikash Ranjan Bhattacharya; and younger candidates like Meenakshi Mukherjee and Dipsita Dhar.



EXPRESS READ

Quota: Recruitment for 56K posts gets nod

Bengaluru: With the cabinet giving approval to implement temporary internal quota for Scheduled Castes, the Department of Personnel and Administrative Reforms has issued an order to proceed with the recruitment for 56,432 posts. The government has also ordered withdrawal of ongoing recruitment processes initiated under the earlier September 3, 2025, order on internal reservation. All such notifications will be reissued in line with the revised framework | **P4**

Khandre wants IAF to return 'Aero India' land

Bengaluru: Forest Minister Eshwar B Khandre on Tuesday said the Yelahanka Air Force Station land, where 'Aero India' is held, is part of the Gantiganahalli reserve forest. He said over 444 acres of land was given to the Indian Air Force (IAF) in Jarakabande Kaval. "We have asked the IAF to return it or give us alternative land. Similar is the case with Peenya plantation, which is under HMT. We are now fighting a legal battle," he said | **P2**

Chintaki sees state's highest ever of 46°C

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@Bengaluru

CHINTAKI in Aurad taluk of Bidar district on Monday recorded a maximum temperature of 46 degrees Celsius. Ever since the weather records have been kept, this is the highest maximum temperature recorded by a region in Karnataka, said Karnataka State Natural Disaster Monitoring Centre (KSNDMC) Director MS Divakara on Tuesday. On Tuesday, too, Chintaki recorded 46 degrees Celsius.

Raichur's Lingasguru recorded a maximum of 44 degrees Celsius and Bengaluru Urban 38 degrees Celsius. While the maximum peak temperatures are a concern, what is more important is how long these maximums stay, he said.

"The maximum peaks in Bidar and Raichur were recorded around 2.15 pm. It remained constant for sometime and then dipped slightly. For over seven hours, these two regions and many other parts of the state experienced over 40 degrees Celsius. This is now becoming a growing concern," he said.

Divakara said prolonged high temperatures impact minimum temperatures. This increases night temperatures, which are above normal by over 2-3 degrees Celsius. In Bengaluru, the minimum temperature on Monday was 25 degrees Celsius. For the last 29 days, the minimum temperature had been around 24 degrees Celsius. There is no cooling during night hours, which is impacting people, he said. **P5**

RIGHTS DISCUSSION

50 BJP cadres detained at Khalid event

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@ Bengaluru

POLICE detained around fifty cadres of the BJP's youth wing, Yuva Morcha, who attempted to protest against a discussion of a book by Umar Khalid, an undertrial in Tihar jail in connection with the Delhi riots in 2020, near Bangalore International Centre on Tuesday.

According to the police, around 5:15 pm, 45 minutes before the discussion on 'Umar Khalid and His World' at BIC, the Yuva Morcha cadres arrived near the venue but were swiftly rounded up. Earlier, they had asked the Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru, to stop the event. Anirban Bhattacharya, Banajyotsna Lahiri and Shudhhabrata Sengupta, the editors of the book, recounted their experience with Khalid. **P6**

South panchayats outperform North on multiple parameters: Govt data

JITENDRA CHOUBEY @ New Delhi

A new study has revealed that the South outperformed northern states in rural local governance across various parameters, including health, education, poverty alleviation, water and sanitation, and developments focused on women and children. West Bengal did not participate in the study.

Most of the panchayats in the 'Achiever' category are from states like Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, and Odisha.

In the Northeast, Tripura leads the charts. On the flip side, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan are at the lower end of the ranking table.

PAI PANCHAYAT ADVANCEMENT INDEX PORTAL

The report, titled the Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) 2.0 for 2023–24, documents rural and social development based on 112 indicators aimed at strengthening grassroots governance. Released by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj, the report covers a total of 3,313 panchayats that fall under the 'Achiever' category for poverty reduction and livelihood generation. Additionally, 1,015 panchayats are recognised for exemplary achievements in promoting healthy living.

The report offers a detailed analysis of more than 250,000 panchayats across the country. Each one is assessed based on over 150 parameters.

"We considered 112 parameters. While data for seven parameters was questioned, and the rest overlapped with other indicators," said Sushil Kumar Lohani, Additional Secretary at the ministry.

AI HUB IN THE MAKING

Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu in conversation with Union minister Ashwini Vaishnaw during the foundation stone-laying ceremony of the Google Cloud India AI Hub, in Visakhapatnam on Tuesday | PTI | **P7**

Gig workers to get pension, maternity help

ASHWINI M SRIPAD @ Bengaluru

GIG workers in Karnataka may soon receive social security benefits such as pension in case of injury, and maternity support, including monthly financial assistance for women workers. Eligibility is likely to be linked to completing a minimum number of gigs within a 90-day period.

The Labour department is in the process of framing a comprehensive mechanism in association with International Social Security Association (ISSA) and International Labour Organisation (ILO), aimed at benefiting lakhs of gig workers across the state.

As on Tuesday, 23 aggregators, including Uber, Ola, Swiggy, Zomato and others, have provided 12.19lakh gig workers' data. **CONTINUED ON: P4**

Uttara Kannada admin surveys, names 24 islets to promote tourism

Devgad Island, as named by the Uttara Kannada administration | SUBHASH CHANDRA NS

SUBHASH CHANDRA NS @Karwar

UNIDENTIFIED islands of Uttara Kannada scattered in the Arabian Sea along the coasts of Karwar and Bhatkal are being named by the district administration to develop tourism in these spaces. This is the first time that these tiny islets are being named.

The process has already begun with a committee, chaired by Uttara Kannada Deputy Commissioner Lakshmi Priya, naming these islands. "Karwar has 24 such islands. They have been identified and surveyed, while six have been named after what the fishermen called them. The remaining will be named by the committee," said Uttara Kannada Additional Deputy Commissioner Sajid Ahmed Mulla.

These islets were surveyed using drones and new survey numbers given. "They are revenue lands and span 100 hectares all put together. Once the process is complete, they will be recommended for overall development and a report will be submitted to the government to develop tourism," Mulla said.

The committee has recommended only those names that are commonly mentioned by the local fishermen. Some islands seen only in low tide have been named after the beaches that adjoin them. For instance, the Devgad island and its adjoining islands have been named Devgad 1 and Devgad. Similarly, the rocky islands near Kurmagad (Cintacor Island) have been named Kumragad 1 and Kurmagad 2.

"Some of these islands are extensions of the Western Ghats, submerged in the Holocene period 5,000-10,000 years ago," said Prof Shivakumar Haragi, Head, Department of Marine Biology, Karnataka University, Dharwad. **P7**